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TITLE: Automatic send to embedded fax/e-mail address

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ABSTRACT:

CHG DATE=20010704 STATUS=O> Embedded writing or typing in a fax document or white board presentation are detected in a predetermined region of the document, recognized and converted into textual data corresponding to the fax telephone number or e-mail of the recipient of the document. The fax telephone number is automatically dialed without requiring the user to input the telephone number or even select a speed dial telephone number, although the use of confirmation of the scanned and textually converted fax telephone number or e-mail is within the principles of the present invention. In a first embodiment, the present invention adds the capability to a fax machine to scan the first page of the outgoing fax (e.g., the cover page) for detection and recognition (e.g., optical character recognition (OCR)) of the recipient's fax number and automatically dials it if found. Moreover, the sender's identification (e.g., telephone number and/or name) can also or alternatively be automatically scanned and determined to replace, add to, or otherwise overwrite the default header information programmed into the sending fax machine. In this way, the fax machine can automatically dial the sender's fax number, and/or imprint the customized header on the outgoing faxed pages with the sender's telephone number and/or name. A look-up table may be maintained to correlate specific names of individuals or businesses with specific fax telephone numbers or e-mail addresses. In another embodiment, a scanning white board allows a destination telephone number or e-mail address to be written in a predetermined area, and either periodically or upon demand the white board is scanned, and the image automatically faxed or e-mailed to the designated

destination.



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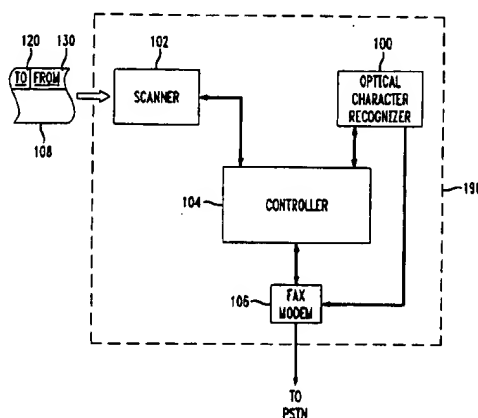
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(54) **Automatic send to embedded fax/e-mail address**

(57) Embedded writing or typing in a fax document or white board presentation are detected in a predetermined region of the document, recognized and converted into textual data corresponding to the fax telephone number or e-mail of the recipient of the document. The fax telephone number is automatically dialed without requiring the user to input the telephone number or even select a speed dial telephone number, although the use of confirmation of the scanned and textually converted fax telephone number or e-mail is within the principles of the present invention. In a first embodiment, the present invention adds the capability to a fax machine to scan the first page of the outgoing fax (e.g., the cover page) for detection and recognition (e.g., optical character recognition (OCR)) of the recipient's fax number and automatically dials it if found. Moreover, the sender's identification (e.g., telephone number and/or name) can also or alternatively be automatically scanned and determined to replace, add to, or otherwise overwrite the default header information programmed into the sending fax machine. In this way, the fax machine can automatically dial the sender's fax number, and/or imprint the customized header on the outgoing faxed pages with the sender's telephone number and/or name. A look-up table may be maintained to correlate specific names of individuals or businesses with specific fax telephone numbers or e-mail addresses. In another embodiment, a scanning white board allows a destination telephone number or e-mail address to be written in a predetermined area, and either periodically or upon demand the

white board is scanned, and the image automatically faxed or e-mailed to the designated destination.

**FIG. 1**



## Description

### Field Of The Invention

[0001] This invention relates generally to the facilitation of common manual tasks such as facsimile transmission and white board presentations. More particularly, it relates to an efficient technique and apparatus for automating facsimile and/or e-mail transmissions in general.

### Background Of Related Art

[0002] Two very common tasks performed typically in office environments include sending a facsimile transmission ("fax"), and utilizing a white board in a presentation to a group. The present invention, while not limited to use with only a fax or white board, is described with respect to these two specific examples.

[0003] Fax machines, while automating the operations necessary to transmit an image to a remote location over a telephone line, nevertheless requires a certain amount of manual input to control the fax machine. For instance, whenever someone sends a fax with a fax machine, the user typically must manually enter the recipient's telephone number (unless the telephone number happens to already be programmed in the speed dial memory of the fax machine). Even speed dialing requires a small amount of manual selection of the pre-programmed telephone number by the user.

[0004] Besides requiring an amount of time for the user to provide the manual input, either method of instructing the fax machine as to the recipient of the fax further incurs a certain amount of risk of error of entry. When manually inputting a recipient's telephone number, there is a significant risk that one or more of the digits will be erroneously input. Fortunately, there is an unlikely chance that the erroneously input telephone number will actually correspond to another fax machine, and thus such an erroneous input typically fails and the sender is immediately made aware of the failure of the outgoing fax. There is a more significant risk that a fax will be transmitted to a wrong fax machine when using speed dial, because each speed dial will presumably correspond to a separate fax machine.

[0005] There is a need to not only reduce or eliminate the need for manual input when sending a fax to speed up operations, but also to improve the reliability and reduce the risk of a sending a fax to a wrong fax machine.

[0006] The need for reducing or eliminating manual input and improving reliability of successful and correctly addressed transmissions carries over to other tasks. For instance, a white board is used quite often in an office environment as an alternative to the older (and messier) technology of a chalk board.

[0007] A white board is a device which has become quite common in today's business world. A white board typically allows the use of a dry erase marker on a large

white board wheeled to a location in front of a room. Sophisticated white boards include an internal scanner which scans and prints images, words, and any other marks made on a white board.

[0008] The print capability of the sophisticated white boards grew from the need to record the writings on the white board. For instance, a meeting may solicit input from a large group of people, and summarize the group input on the white board as the group assists. At the end (or many times during) the meeting, a person is typically designated to manually "copy down" what remained on the white board. The ability to scan and print the contents of a white board eliminated the need to manually "copy down" the contents of the white board, and made record keeping from white boards more efficient and reliable. The printed records of the white board could then be faxed to another party, scanned and e-mailed to the other party, etc., albeit subjecting the faxing of the printed records to the same manual input problems as any document being faxed.

[0009] In addition to the manual input and reliability problems associated with conventional fax machines, relevant regulations typically require the identification of the sending party of a fax to be imprinted in the header of the received document. This identity is typically set once by the installer of a fax machine to an identity of the owner of the fax machine.

[0010] However, a number of users may share a fax machine, making the pre-set identifying information pre-set in the fax machine imprecise or over generalized. For instance, individuals may prefer to receive faxes on their computer fax/modem, or use one of the Internet based services (such as [www.efax.com](http://www.efax.com)) that provide unique fax numbers to individuals, but nevertheless prefer to send outgoing faxes from a shared fax machine (e.g., in a common area, at a local retail store having fax services, etc.). However, the imprinted identifying information may or may not relate to the identity of the actual individual sending the fax. For instance, the identity may be a retail store name, company name, etc., when the sender would have preferred to have a name or telephone number more closely associated with themselves. This might not be desirable to some, e.g., a person who wants to maintain an individual or department identity with his or her own name and fax number. For instance, a start-up business might want to present their business in the best possible light, and might be embarrassed by the imprinting of the commercial fax service on their outgoing faxes.

[0011] The header name to be imprinted on outgoing faxes could be reprogrammed on a fax-by-fax basis, but this would be quite cumbersome and time consuming with respect to each outgoing fax.

[0012] Computer faxing solves the problem of requiring manual entry of a destination fax number or e-mail address. However, computer faxing is typically limited to sending only electronic documents. Moreover, speed dial telephone numbers help only for faxes to recipients